

Cache Conservation News Spring 2000

*A newsletter of the Blacksmith Fork and North Cache Soil Conservation
Districts*

Every Day is Earth Day for Farmers and Ranchers!

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

*By S. Bruce Karren, Chairman
North Cache Soil Conservation District*

Success for conservation districts is measured where the rubber hits the road – on the land. Local conservation districts' successes are the many plans put into practice by landowners who recognize the importance of protecting our valuable natural resources.

The **NEED** is there; the **DESIRE** is there. The only factor holding us back is **FUNDING**.

How can the districts best find the funding to help landowners put conservation practices on the land? The answer is remarkably simple: **cooperation**. In government circles the process is called Coordinated Resource Management Planning, which consists of three key components:

- a. A process = locally led conservation;
- b. A goal = quality and productivity;
- c. A vision = inclusion of all interested parties.

Whatever you call it, the bottom line is additional funding.

By working together, various natural resource agencies and other interested parties can identify common goals and through consensus address all views of the resource needs. Our success will be measured by water quality improvements in all Cache Valley waterways. A wise man once said: "Going it alone is not an option." Cooperation is the key.

State: Little Bear River improves markedly

There has been marked improvement in the water quality of the Little Bear River drainage in the last five years, according to a report released recently by the Utah Department of Environmental Quality's Division of Water Quality. The report is entitled "Little Bear River Intensive Monitoring Study."

The first intensive monitoring period was in 1992 and 1993; the second was done in 1998 and 1999. "A general trend in water quality improvement was observed between the two intensive monitoring periods," according to the report.

The condition of the water was measured by the number of times pollutants exceeded the state-determined standards for beneficial uses of the stream. Pollutants measured included phosphorous, nitrates, nitrites, total dissolved solids, total suspended solids, and coliform bacteria.

For example, the Mendon Road monitoring site (the farthest downstream site) showed that the total phosphorous content exceeded state standards 40% fewer times during the 1998-99 monitoring period than during the monitoring 5 years earlier. Exceedences for total suspended solids were down 31%.

Improvement in the water quality of the Little Bear River is attributed to the improved management practices of farmers in the watershed. In 1990 The Little Bear River Hydrologic Unit Area was established. A locally driven, voluntary water quality improvement project, coordinated by the Blacksmith Fork SCD in cooperation with the USDA NRCS, the USU Extension Service, Division of Water Quality, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other agencies.

EXTENSION CORNER

Watch those opportunity costs!

Most people are concerned about costs. There are two types of costs. The first is what we pay for things we buy. We know fairly well how much we have to pay for a ton of fertilizer, a pickup truck, or a gallon of Roundup.

The second cost is the revenue we lose as a result of not implementing a practice. It is often much more costly than the first. For example, a farmer knows that a ton of Treble Super Phosphate costs \$225 a ton. A soil test shows that his field has only 2 PPM of phosphorus. To bring this 10-acre field up to the recommended phosphorus level, he would have to apply 225 pounds of P205 per acre. This would amount to 2250 pounds P205 or 5000 pounds of 0-45-0 fertilizer for the ten acres. The cost of this fertilizer would be \$562.50.

An alfalfa field with a 2 PPM soil test is only expected to produce ten percent of its maximum yield potential. If we assume a maximum yield potential of six tons per acre, this field would yield only 0.6 ton per acre or 6 tons for the ten acres. If alfalfa is valued at \$80 per ton, the value of the hay produced on our ten-acre field would be \$480.

If the farmer applied the recommended amount of fertilizer, the yield should increase to 60 tons for the ten acres with a value of \$4800. By spending \$562.50 for the fertilizer, the farmer could increase his returns by \$3757.50. For a \$12 investment to have a soil test run, a farmer can find out if his field is deficient in nutrients.

This same analysis could be used to tabulate the cost of rations for dairy cows, controlling weeds in hay and grain crops, and many other practices on the farm. Remember that the greatest costs are not what you pay for something, but the lost production that comes from not implementing a practice.

-- Don A. Huber, Cache County Extension Agent

ACTION BY THE BOARDS OF SUPERVISORS

Joint Action

- Investigating the feasibility of establishing a page on the world wide web.
- Approved purchase of teaching materials for Soil Stewardship Week
- Serving as the Agriculture Protection Area Advisory Board recommended approval of three APA requests: LW Dairy Partnership, Steve Wright, and a 739-acre parcel of land with various landowners, all in the Mt. Sterling area.
- Participated in the local work group, addressing area natural resource concerns.

Blacksmith Fork

- Approved sponsorship of teacher for the Ag in the Classroom national conference, June 14–17.
- Held a public meeting on the TMDL established for the Little Bear River.
- Conservation proposal approved for planning for Max Wilkinson.
- Approved conservation plans for Brad Nielsen, Glen Hansen.
- Supported a proposal for the control of medusahead rye
- Decided to sponsor three teams for the Envirothon in May
- Reviewed a draft of a feasibility study for a proposed regional animal waste composting facility.

North Cache

- Acquired stinger (used for planting willows in riparian areas) and fabric layer for use by cooperators (using a grant from the US Fish and Wildlife Service), and established a rental fee for each in order to cover the cost of maintenance.
- Approved conservation plans for Herbert Creech and Clair Allen.
- Continued its leadership role in the Cub River improvement project.

USU student to advise Blacksmith Fork Junior Board

Mark B. Major is the new advisor to the BSF Junior Board. A native of Davis county, he is working toward his Master's degree in Agriculture Systems Technology and Education. This summer he will work as an intern with Brad Sampson in Cache County Extension. Mark is also working at the Caine Dairy.

The Junior Board met in March, and decided to meet in April at the Gordon Zilles dairy to see conservation practices. This spring, the members hope to participate in wildlife counts and in planting along riverbanks.

Landowners respond to request for Cub River demonstration project

The Cub River Water Quality Project continues to move forward as several landowners within the project area responded to the local steering committee's appeal for interested participants willing to demonstrate implementation of conservation practices that will improve the quality of water. Project requests include improvements to animal feeding operations, streambank protection, and improved land management practices. Selected projects will complete the conservation planning process later this spring with implementation to begin in late summer or early fall.

U.S.U. Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning's graduate students completed work on the Cub River Futures Study 2000. The project model highlights three potential growth scenarios within the watershed and their potential impacts to water quality and related resource issues. The study will be used to guide planning efforts. For more information, contact the Bear River RC&D office at 753-5616, ext.33.

-- Jon Hardman, NRCS

Compost rules may change

A front page story in the Logan Herald Journal on March 9 reported that on-farm composting operations were being regulated by the "Utah Department of Solid Waste." A local dairy had been cited for "failing to comply with the state's standard for waste water management." The action caught valley dairy operators who are composting by surprise.

The latest word at press time is that the Division of Solid Waste and the Division of Water Quality together will develop compost management standards acceptable to the Solid Waste Division. The Division of Water Quality will then enforce the standards. Whether a permit for on-farm composting operations will be required has not yet been decided. It appears that enforcement of the two citations that have been issued in Cache County will be put on hold until the new standards are developed.

Irrigators agree: A consortium is needed

A group of about 40 persons, mostly representatives of irrigation companies, agreed recently that a consortium of canal companies is needed to work on problems common to all of them.

Utah Rep. Craig Buttars, R-Lewiston, distributed a proposal that described the functions of a consortium to:

- Present a united front in negotiations with municipalities and the county on the drainage of storm water into canals, use of canals for recreational trails, and other problems related to canals in urban areas.
- Present a united voice representing the interests of Cache Valley in the development and distribution of water resources in Cache Valley.
- Pool resources to retain legal counsel to resolve increasing numbers of legal questions that affect the water interests of the entire valley.

To prepare for the organization of a consortium, Buttars appointed an advisory committee to gather information and report at a future meeting. The members of the committee are Gordon Zilles, Jeffry Gittins, Noble Erickson, Charles Batten, Thad Erickson, Robert Fotheringham, and Lynn James

LEGISLATIVE NEWS

Several measures important to agriculture were approved during the recent session of the state legislature.

A bill sponsored by Representative Craig Buttars, Lewiston, amends the posting requirement for hunting on private lands. The new provision requires that any person engaged in wildlife-related activities must have written permission from the landowner or person in charge before entering any cultivated land or irrigated pasture land. The Division of Wildlife Resources will provide "hunting by permission cards" to landowners upon request. The bill has been signed by the Governor.

An appropriation of \$100,000 to the Utah Department of Agriculture and Food to be distributed to soil conservation districts was sponsored by Representative James R. Gowans, of Tooele. The funds are to be used for developing conservation plans for farmers and ranchers. Signed by the Governor.

An act specifying requirements for updating the ownership of water rights on the records of the state engineer and authorizing him to make rules and charge fees was signed by the governor.

In other legislation, funding was authorized for Agriculture in the Classroom, a Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative, grasshopper and cricket control, noxious weed control, and mapping of certain public rights of way over public lands. Deer and elk hunting license fees were increased by \$5, and \$200,000 of the increased revenue earmarked for wildlife damage control.

White elected to Blacksmith Fork board

Jon White, of Paradise has been elected to both the Blacksmith Fork SCD board of supervisors and the Farm Service Agency (FSA) county committee. Jon is continuing a long tradition of service to conservation and agriculture. He is the son of the late Barney White, who was first elected supervisor of the Blacksmith Fork district in 1968, and continued to serve in various capacities until his death in 1997.

Jon's major products are cattle, hay and grain. In 1996, he was named cooperator of the year by the Blacksmith Fork SCD board. He has controlled brush, reseeded range land, built structures to stabilize stream banks, installed a half mile of fencing, practices conservation tillage, and worked to clean up McMurdie Hollow.

Jon replaces Bruce Darley, of Hyrum, who has been a valuable member of the board since he was elected in 1996.

Incumbents Keven Bankhead of Wellsville and Richard Nielsen of Nibley were re-elected to the Blacksmith Fork board. D. Wesley Roundy of Cache Junction, Joseph G. Larsen of Newton, and Shane Munk of Amalga were re-elected to the North Cache SCD board.

Cooperators sought for demonstration project

The local workgroup has received funding for a demonstration water quality improvement project in the Amalga-Benson area. There are nearly 30 livestock operations in the Amalga-Benson area, with an estimated 5,000 one thousand-pound animal units. They generate about 85,000 tons of waste annually.

Operations will be selected to participate on the basis of size of operation, nearness to water, the operator's interest in the project, and ability to complete the project within a reasonable time frame and show it to others.

The project will emphasize five major conservation practices. They are waste management, waste storage, waste utilization, nutrient management, and prescribed grazing. The quality of the nearby surface waters will be monitored.

If you have a livestock operation in the Amalga-Benson area, and would like to participate in this demonstration project, contact Bill McMullin, NRCS, at 753-5616.

Reasons to protect farmland

From 1992 to 1997 nearly 16 million acres of agricultural and forest land in the U.S. were converted to other uses. We are now losing 3 million acres annually of forest and agricultural land -- double the amount that was lost during the 10 years before 1992. In Utah, 21,020 acres of agricultural land are lost each year, according to the USDA.

An online slide presentation developed by Utah Agriculture Commissioner Cary Peterson provides good arguments for creating a climate favorable to agriculture in Cache Valley. You can find "Reasons to Protect Farmland" at <http://www.ag.state.ut.us>.

Many important bits of information are provided in the slide presentation. For example, 80% of our fruit, 70% of our vegetables, 50% of our dairy products, and about 30% of our meat and grains are grown in areas threatened by development.

Local leadership emphasized at NACD's 54th Annual Meeting

Rudy Rice, President of the National Association of Conservation Districts, stressed the importance of local leadership as he addressed the association's 54th annual meeting in Colorado Springs, Colorado,

"NACD has had a positive impact on the nation's conservation agenda, and more importantly, on the landscape," Rice continued. Conservation districts are a major component to achieving delivery of conservation programs through a voluntary approach to solving problems. "Grassroots is the key to past success, and will be the key to future success. I thank everyone for their support of conservation and the wise use of our nation's natural resources."

George Frampton, Acting Chair of the Council on Environmental Quality, and senior environmental advisor to President Clinton and Vice President Gore believes that in the next 10 years NACD and its members will be on the "cutting edge" of the next challenge--the challenge of conservation on private lands.

A survey unveiled at the session reported that 80 percent of a random national audience strongly identified with and would support an organization such as NACD. Mike McClellan, president, Plexus Marketing Group in Atlanta, GA., surveyed a cross section of the general public in the U.S. regarding NACD's Conservation Cause. Results also showed that most individuals agree with NACD that conservation efforts should be locally led.

GLEANINGS

A cooperative program to control medusahead rye has been proposed by Joel Merritt, of the Cache County Weed Department, and Mike Ralphs, a landowner. Medusahead is unpalatable to livestock and wildlife. It forms a thick thatch that smothers all other vegetation. When it takes over large areas, grazing capacity is reduced up to 80 percent. For more information contact Joel at 716-8342.

"Noxious Weed Field Guide for Utah" is an excellent little booklet published by the Cache County Weed Department. It includes color photographs and descriptions of

weeds declared noxious by the state and by counties. Contacts for assistance are listed. For copies contact the county weed department at (435)716-8342.

For up to date information on both local and national markets, check out USU Extension's Agline at <http://www.econ.usu.edu/agline>.

World population reached 6 billion people in 1999. Yet worldwide availability of food has increased over the last 30 years by 19 percent, and in developing countries, it grew by one third.

Farm Bureau News, March, 2000

Carbon trading may offer farmers in Ireland a way around increasing restrictions on the release of methane by cows. One fifth of the greenhouse gas emissions in Ireland comes from cows. Investing in methane recovery or afforestation might result in some form of credit, and those wishing to quit farming could sell the resulting reduction in gas emissions.

-- *The Irish Times*, <http://www.ireland.com>

Ranchers near Clovis, California, are blaming urban sprawl for the killing of 25 cattle and injuring of many more by dogs running in packs.

—*KVNU March 14, 2000*

The Farm Bureau celebrated February 9 as Food Check-Out Day. Between Jan. 1 and Feb. 9 the average American earned enough to pay for his or her family's food supply for the entire year.

There are an estimated 11,595,000 acres of farmland in Utah, in about 15,000 farms.

Water board makeup decided

The Cache County Council tentatively agreed at a workshop on March 14 that the reactivated water policy advisory board should consist of 3 persons from agriculture, 3 from municipalities, 1 from the County Council, 2 members with some technical expertise, and 2 members at large. The council will appoint the members and the chair person, who will be someone other than the council representative.

The ordinance setting up the new advisory board was approved on first reading March 28, and as this newsletter goes to press, is expected to receive final approval April 11. Nominations for positions on the board may be submitted to County Executive Lynn Lemon.

Congratulations

Noble Erickson, North Cache SCD board supervisor, was named outstanding farmer of the year by the Cache County Farm Bureau. **Mrs. Erickson**, was named outstanding farm woman of the year. Both were recognized for their many years of service to agriculture.

Jon Hardman, of the Logan office of NRCS was named Resource Professional of the Year by the Utah chapter of the Soil and Water Conservation Society.

Ron Nichols, NRCS' State Communications Director for Utah, recently received the National Communications Award from the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD).

Coming events

Utah Envirothon, May 12 & 13, Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management area. Contact Jennifer Hines at (435)753-6029.

Nonpoint Source Conference, July 18–20, Logan. Contact Jack Wilbur at (801)538-7098.

National Ag in the Classroom conference, June 14–17, Salt Lake City. Contact Debra Spielmaker at (435)797-1657.

The Changing Focus of Water Resources, American Water Resources Association—Utah Section annual conference, April 27, Salt Lake City. Contact Eric Klotz, (801)538-7264.

Cost-share funds available for wildlife habitat

The North Cache Soil Conservation District has cost-share funds available through the Partners for Fish and Wildlife program, administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

The program provides cost-share dollars to farmers and ranchers interested in increasing production while improving wildlife habitat. This private lands program provides funding through cost-share agreements for 10-30 years for both uplands and wetlands.

Projects may include fencing, water development, re-establishment of riparian habitat, installation of water control structures and others.

Interested landowners are invited to contact Wayne Greenhalgh, 753-5616, ext. 21, at the North Cache Soil Conservation District office.

-- Jennifer Hines, UACD

Teams ready for Utah Envirothon

Cache Valley high school students are busy preparing for the Utah Envirothon. The Envirothon will be held May 12-13 at Farmington Bay Waterfowl Management Area on the shores of the Great Salt Lake. Teams from Mountain Crest, South Cache Freshman Center and Logan High will compete against others in the state. Organizers expect approximately 20 teams this year.

The Envirothon is a natural resource competition for high school students grades 9-12. As a team, students are tested on their knowledge of natural resources including soils, forestry, wildlife, aquatics and a current environmental issue. This year's current topic is wetlands management.

The winning team will receive a trip to the Canon Envirothon in Wolfville, Nova Scotia, Aug. 1-5, 2000. The Utah Envirothon is sponsored by the Utah Association of Conservation Districts, Utah Department of Environmental Quality, Utah Soil Conservation Commission, Campbell Scientific, Utah State University College of Natural Resources, Bridgerland Audubon Society and others.

-- Jennifer Hines, UACD

ALPHABET SOUP

SCD – soil conservation district

TMDL – total maximum daily load

NRCS -- Natural Resources Conservation Service

UACD – Utah Association of Conservation Districts

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